

when the first and second trim parts are [disposed] supported adjacent one another in a vehicle;

where an undercut portion

forming a recess_A in the mating surface of the first trim part after providing the first trim part; and

providing buffer material in the recess so as to provide a bead of buffer material on the mating surface of the first trim part; [and]

allowing the bead to mechanically connect to the first trim part by hardening of the buffer material within the recess; and

supporting the first and second trim parts adjacent one another with the second trim part contacting the bead of buffer material.

Sub E3 Claim 9 (amended). The method of claim 8 in which the step of providing buffer material includes the steps of:

operatively connecting an applicator to the robot adjacent the recess-forming tool;

connecting a source of buffer material in fluid communication with the applicator; and

operating the robot to simultaneously move the forming tool into and along the mating surface of the first trim part while moving the applicator in spaced generally parallel relationship with the mating surface and in trailing relationship to the recess-forming tool, the trailing applicator providing buffer material in the recess [formed by the preceding forming tool so as] to [and] overfill the recess and provide a bead of buffer material on the mating surface of the first trim part.

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 remain in the application. The examiner has withdrawn claims 12-18 from further consideration as being drawn to a non-elected invention.

The applicant confirms the election of claims 1-11 for further prosecution in this application.

The office action rejects claims 1-11 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, par. 2, as being indefinite. According to the action, claim 1 is incomplete because steps of the claim don't recite a method for assembling interior vehicle trim parts. The applicant has amended claim 1 to include the step of supporting the first and second trim parts adjacent one another with second trim part contacting the beaded buffer material. As amended, the claim recites a method for mounting material vehicle trim parts.

The office action also states that the phrase "the trailing applicator...overfill the recess" in claim 9 is indefinite and confusing because it is idiomatically incorrect. The applicant has amended claim 9 accordingly.

The office action rejects claims 1-11 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the admitted prior art set forth on page 1-3 of the specification in view of Henzl (USPN 4124676) or Reid et al (USPN 5810406). According to the action, the admitted prior art and Henzl or Reid et al are combinable because "they are analogous with respect to the desire to form a stronger bond between mating materials." The action then goes on to say it would have been obvious to apply the mechanical bond formation methods disclosed in either Henzl or Reid et al to the admitted prior art to overcome the problem of bonding elastomer to the various materials of automotive interior trim.

Prevailing case law requires that when a rejection depends on a combination of prior art references, the prior art or knowledge generally available to one skilled in the art teach, suggest or provide some motivation to combine the references. In other words, there must be something, either in the prior art or in the general knowledge available to one skilled in the art, to suggest the desirability, and thus the obviousness, of combining the references as suggested. Nothing in the Henzl reference teaches, suggests or implies (by providing a motive) that adjacent trim parts might be assembled by forming a recess in one of the parts and providing buffer material in the recess such that a beaded buffer material is left standing on the mating surface of that part.

In fact, the suggested combination of the “admitted prior art” and Henzl does not arrive at the invention of claim 1 because the combination does not include a process step of forming a recess in the mating surface of an existing part. Instead, Henzl teaches the formation of recesses in a first layer of material as that layer of material is being molded. Neither does the combination disclose the provision of buffer material in the recess so as to provide the bead of buffer material on the mating surface. Instead, the combination teaches the formation of a coextensive second layer of material on the first layer of material, and forcing the second layer of material into a predetermined toroidal shape of rectangular cross section as defined by a complementary shaped mold. Therefore, claims 1-11 are patentable over the admitted prior art in view of Henzl.

The applicant has amended claim 1 to more clearly recite that the formation of the recess occurs after the provision of the first trim part.

Regarding Reid, Jr. et al, nothing in this reference teaches, suggests or implies that a recess might be formed in the mating surface of a first trim part and the buffer material provided in the recess so as to provide a bead of buffer material on the mating surface. In fact, the suggested combination of the admitted prior art and Reid et al does not arrive at the invention of claim 1. Neither the admitted prior art nor Reid et al disclose forming a recess in the mating surface of an existing part. Instead, Reid et al discloses the extrusion of an elongated part through an extension die shaped to form elongated recesses in the part as it is being extruded. In addition, neither the admitted prior art nor Reid et al disclose providing buffer material in the recesses to provide a bead of buffer material on a mating surface of the part. Instead, Reid, Jr. et al discloses a co-extrusion process that forms a pair of trim strips together in a mechanically interlocked configuration. Therefore, claim 1 and dependent claims 2-11 are patentable over the admitted prior art in view of Reid, et al.

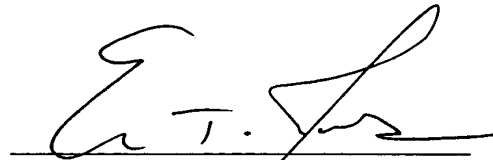
Claims 1-11 recite patentable subject matter and are allowable. Therefore, the applicant respectfully submits that the application is now in condition for allowance

and respectfully solicits such allowance. Please favorably reconsider the outstanding office action.

I authorize the Assistant Commissioner to charge any deficiencies, or credit any overpayment associated with this communication to Deposit Account No. 50-0853.

Respectfully submitted,

REISING, ETHINGTON, BARNES, KISSELLE,
LEARMAN & McCULLOCH, PLLC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. T. Jones", is written over a horizontal line.

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